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STATE FOR DAVID BROWN (OES/ENV)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: SAICM DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: STATE 011460

1. Requested demarche on the February 4-6 International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was delivered on January 27 to Enid Chaverri, the Environment Ministry's Acting Director of the Office for International Cooperation. Chaverri said that Costa Rica intended to coordinate its positions on the issues raised with other countries through GRULAC. Chaverri described herself as a believer in SAICM to manage the multiplicity of international agreements related to chemicals management and their occasional contradictions (eg., ozone and climate change). In practical terms, she looked to SAICM to address the transversal themes that occur within these many international conventions; provide a common direction for the manner in which they are to be implemented; and ground actions to be taken under these agreements. She flagged the challenge facing Costa Rica's Environment Ministry, a "green-issue" organization new to the chemical management agenda, to prevail on the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, traditional managers of Costa Rican policy on chemicals, to take on the board the approaches developed through SAICM. With regard to specific points raised in the demarche:

-- Costa Rica will follow GRULAC's lead on the choice of texts to be negotiated - a discussion which has yet to occur. Chaverri undertook to review Overarching Policy Strategy paragraphs 14(d) and 15(c).

-- Precaution and scope: Chaverri opined that most participants would not expect SAICM to produce an agreement that would seek to reopen or alter obligations incurred under other agreements. In her view, most would look instead to SAICM to promote harmony in the implementation of the numerous (and occasionally inconsistent) agreements.

-- Savings clause: Chaverri had no immediate reaction to this point.

-- Global Plan of Action (GPA): Chaverri described differences over the GPA as a cultural matter, with some countries feeling compelled to seek recognition for their perceived needs by placing them on the record. Although as yet there is no Costa Rican position on the point, her personal assessment is that the GPA is more of a toolkit than a strategy, and that the situation is so different country to country that it could not serve well as a strategy. The document and its purposes may well change through additional discussion.

2. Ms Chaverri will be accompanied to SAICM by Costa Rica's Customs Laboratory Director. Note: Chaverri supervises Ronald Vargas, one of two regional co-points of contact for the U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and the related Environmental Cooperation Agreement. End note.
LANGDALE